Rashi on Nahum
רש"י על נחום
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Rashi on Nahum

Chapter 1

Verse 1

The harsh prophecy concerning Nineveh Heb. מַשָּׂא. The burden of the cup of the curse [which was] to be given Nineveh to drink.
The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite —חזון is vowelized with a "kamatz" (חָזוֹן) since it is not in the construct state, and it is unlike "חֲזוֹן יְשַׁעְיָהוּ," the vision of Isaiah, which is vowelized with a "hataf pattah." This is its meaning: A book of vision has already been written concerning it [Nineveh], the prophecy of Jonah son of Amittai; and now, again, Nahum the Elkoshite prophesied this harsh prophecy over it. Elkosh is the name of his [Nahum's] city. And so did Jonathan paraphrase: In early times, Jonah son of Amittai prophesied concerning it, and they repented of their sins, and when they continued to sin, Nahum of the house of Elkosh prophesied further concerning them. the Elkoshite —That city is in the province of Ballynia, which is in the state of Eretz Israel, although it is outside the Holy Land. Proof of the matter is that there is gold, silver, and salt dust near it because the Dead Sea, which is near Eretz Israel, goes there under the earth. In this state they do not crown a king the son of a king [i.e., the throne is not hereditary]; and they are of the seed of Judah. [Sod Mesharim]

Verse 2

The Lord is a jealous and vengeful God —Nahum prophesied concerning Sennacherib's descendants, and in the time of Manasseh, as we find in Seder Olalm (ch.20).
The Lord is a jealous and vengeful God —from the time He avenged Israel upon their enemies, and now too, He is still vengeful and full of wrath. He is destined to wreak vengeance upon His adversaries who destroyed their land and exiled His people. and he bears a grudge Heb. וְנוֹטֵר, lit. watches. He lays up His hatred for His enemies. Rabbi Simon says: These three expressions of vengeance correspond to the three exiles to which Sennacherib exiled Israel, as we find in Seder Olam (ch. 23).

Verse 3

The Lord is slow to anger and great in power —He is great in power, and He has the ability to wreak vengeance. The reason He did not hasten His revenge is that He is slow to anger, but, in any case, He will not acquit.
the Lord - His way is with a tempest and with a storm —They [the tempest and storm] are His messengers for wreaking retribution upon His enemies, as it is stated concerning Egypt (Exod. 14:21): "with a mighty east

wind”; and concerning the generation of the Flood (Job 4:9): “From the breath of God they perish.” Concerning Tyre, it is stated (Ezek. 27:26): “The east wind has broken you.”
and cloud is the dust of His feet —That, too, is the way of His vengeance. (Exod. 14:24) “And the Lord looked over the camp of the Egyptians with a pillar of fire and cloud”; also, (Ezek. 30:18) “As for her, a cloud shall cover her.”

Verse 4

He rebukes the sea —To be understood [both] according to its apparent meaning, and as a figure describing the nations, who are compared to water, as the matter is stated (Isa. 17:12): “Like the rushing of mighty waters they rush.”
and He has dried up all the rivers —Here he prophesies that the Holy One, blessed be He, is destined to crown Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Jehoiakim, and He will deliver Assyria and all the lands to the sword.
Bashan and Carmel —The good dwelling places.
and the blossoms of the Lebanon are cut off —The Sages of Israel explained this as an allusion to the various types of sweet fruit that Solomon planted in the Temple, which were gold; and as soon as the gentiles entered the Temple, they withered. [from Yoma 21b, 39b]

Verse 5

Mountains quaked because of Him —The kings and the princes (of the heathens) shall fear His decree.
raised up Heb. וַתִּשָּׂא ; i.e., raised up a pillar of smoke.

Verse 6

has reached Heb. נָתְכָה, has reached the earth, as in (Exod. 9:33) “And rain did not reach (נָתַךְ) the earth.”
have been broken up by Him —by His fear.

Verse 7

The Lord is good yea, a stronghold —Even when he inflicts retribution upon His enemies, His mercies do not cease to do good to those who fear Him. [This ability is] unlike the trait of [a man of] flesh and blood, who, when he is busy with one thing, is not free to [simultaneously] do another thing, as the matter is stated (Exod. 15:3): “The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His Name.” [This is] as it is stated in Mechilta (ad loc.)
and is cognizant of —the necessities of those who trust in Him.

Verse 8

But, with an overrunning flood —with flooding wrath.
He shall make a full end of its place —the place of the land. This refers back to “and the land raised up from before Him,” as is stated above.

Verse 9

He will make a full end —of Nineveh and the kings of Assyria. He will not repeat this to you again.

Verse 10

For, while the thorns are entangled —I.e., their destruction will come upon them suddenly, and they will not descend from their honor gradually, but while the thorns and the briers are [yet] entangled; i.e., strongly rooted.
and the drunkards are drinking —While they are at their feasts and in their joy. Some interpret כְּי עַד סְירִים as an expression of הֲסָרָה, removal.
they are consumed like dry stubble, fully ripe —Whose ripening has become full and complete, and it has dried out.
fully ripe Heb. מָלֵא ; asovir, to be filled, in O.F And so (Exod. 22:28): "Your ripe fruits (מְלֵאָתְךָ)"; (Deut. 22:9) "The ripe fruit (הַמְּלֵאָה) of the seed."

Verse 11

From you —you, Nineveh.
emanated —Sennacherib, who plots evil, who thought to destroy the earthly abode and the heavenly abode. One passage reads (II Kings 19:23): "And I will come to its remotest lodge"; and one passage reads (Isa. 37:24): "Its remotest height." "First I will destroy His earthly abode, and then I will destroy His heavenly abode" - as found in the chapter " Chelek " (Sanh. 94b).

Verse 12

Though they be at peace and likewise many Jonathan's Targum is very appropriate to the verse: If they [the people of Nineveh] are at peace in their counsel, that they will all be of one accord; and likewise, if the people of Nineveh, your enemies, are many, O Jerusalem; and likewise, even if they have crossed the Tigris and passed over the Euphrates to besiege it, they will not succeed, for I have afflicted you; I will no longer afflict you. I have heard further (this rendering): If they are perfect —the people of Nineveh, in their greatness. and likewise —if they will be still greater and more honored. and so they shall be cut down and pass away —And so I will cut them down and take them away. This is like (Exod 1:12) "And the more they would afflict them, the more they would multiply."
and I will no longer afflict you —I will afflict you this time with destruction and annihilation, and I will no longer be involved with you. Our Sages expounded upon this concerning the practice of charity in Tractate Gittin (7a), but it does not fit in with the context.

Verse 13

And now I will break off his yoke from you —The Shechinah says this to the prophet, who is of Israel: I will break off the yoke of Assyria from you and from My people.

Verse 14

And the Lord shall command concerning you —Now the king of Assyria is being addressed.
No more [offspring] Of your name shall be sown —No king shall arise from you.
I will make your grave —I will make the house of your god your grave, for you shall flee there to escape, and there you shall be slain, as your father was slain in the temple of Nisroch, his god.
for you have become worthless —in My eyes.

Chapter 2

Verse 1

pay your vows —that you vowed to the Holy One, blessed be He, if He would save you from the hand of Sennacherib, king of Assyria - for now you are saved.
for... shall no longer continue to pass through you —that wicked one.
he has been completely cut off —he and his descendants.

Verse 2

The scatterer who came up before you is besieged by a siege —The scatterer, who came up upon the land of Judah before you during the time of Hezekiah, is now besieged by the siege of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who has besieged him.
Watch the way —You men of Judah, watch the crossroads and see those going to besiege him [Sennacherib] and strengthen your loins and fortify your power mightily.

Verse 3

as the pride of Israel —As it was already.
the emptiers have emptied them out —They have plundered them and emptied them. The expression of בְּקִיקָה is appropriate for a vine.

Verse 4

The shields of his mighty men —The mighty of Nebuchadnezzar, who lay siege to Assyria.
are dyed red —They are dyed red, and the men of their army are in crimson, dressed in crimson.
the chariots are in the fire of torches on the day of his preparation Heb. פְּלָדֹת. On the day that he [Nebuchadnezzar] is prepared to go out in the army, he polishes his iron chariots, but I do not know what פְּלָדֹת means. I say that it is a material that polishes iron well. And some interpret פְּלָדֹת as an expression of a fiery torch (לַפִּיד), by transposing the letters.
and the cypresses are enwrapped — Jonathan renders: And the heads of the [Babylonian] camps are enwrapped in colored garments.
are enwrapped Heb. הַרְעָלוּ, enwrapped. Similar is (Isa. 3:19) "The necklaces and the bracelets and the shawls (הָרְעָלוֹת)." In the language of the Mishnah we learned "shawled (רְעוּלוֹת) Arabian women" in tractate Shabbath (65a).

Verse 5

shall dash about madly —They shall behave madly.
they shall clatter Heb. יִשְׁתַּקְשְׁקוּן. Jonathan renders: The sound of the clattering of their weapons is heard. And that is from the expression (Joel 2:24) "And the vats shall roar (וְהֵשִׁיקוּ)," and (Isa. 33:4) "Like the roaring (כְּשַׁשַׁק) of the cisterns." It is an expression of making a sound heard.
they shatter —They shatter their listeners like these lightnings, which agitate the creatures. So did Jonathan render it.

Verse 6

He shall remember —The king of Assyria shall remember his mighty men and his heroes, and he shall contemplate going forth and waging war, but [he and his men] shall stumble in their walk.
they shall hasten to its wall —to flee to run to the wall of the city. Any word requiring a "lammed" in its beginning has a "hey" at its end.
and the protector is armed Heb. הַסֹּכֵךְ. Jonathan renders: They shall build towers. We can also explain וְהֶכֵן הַסֹּכֵךְ: and the king shall be armed with his weapons, as in (Ezek.28:14) "who shelters over a great distance (מְמָשֵׁח הַסֹּכֵךְ)," an expression of ruling.

Verse 7

The gates of the river —The gates of the cities, which are on the sides of the rivers.
and the palace has dissolved —It has quaked and trembled because of the stones of the catapult hurled against its walls, called bombe.

Verse 8

And the queen Heb. וְהֻצַּב. She is the queen who stands to the right of the king, as is stated (Ps. 45:10): "The queen stands to your right."
has been exposed and taken away —In the open, she has gone into captivity and has been taken away from the city.
moan like the voice of doves —They moan with a lamentation like the voice of lamenting doves. moan Heb. מְנַהֲגוֹת, gemissant in French.
beating their breasts Striking their hand on their heart like the beating of a drum.

Verse 9

And Nineveh is like a pool of water - it is since days of yore —Since the day it was founded, it has been sitting tranquilly with no one disturbing it, like a pool of gathered water that does not move from its place.
and they —Now, out of their stress, they have learned to flee and are fleeing.
Halt! Halt! —They say to them, but no one turns his heart to listen and halt.

Verse 10

Plunder silver! Plunder gold! —You who come upon Nineveh.
And there is no end —There is no count.
to the treasures Heb. לְתִכוּנָהּ, to their treasures. [It is called תִּכוּנָהּ] because the silver and gold placed in the treasury is placed there with a count, as you say (II Kings 12:12): "The counted (הַמְתֻכָּן) money."
[following Jonathan]
to sweep out [Nineveh] of all precious vessels Heb. כָּבֹד, an expression of sweeping, as in (below, 3:15) "You shall be swept out (הִתְכַּבְדִי) like the nibbling locust," an expression of sweeping the house; escovant, to sweep them out of all their precious vessels. And so did Jonathan render it: All precious vessels have ended. כָּבֹד is like זָכוֹר, to remember, and שָׁמוֹר, to observe.

Verse 11

Empty Heb. בּוּקָה.
yea, emptied out Heb. וּמְבוּקָה, and emptied out through emptiers.
and breached Heb. וּמְבֻלָּקָה, breached in its walls: espartide in O.F.
the knees stumble Heb. וּפִקּ, the stumbling of the knees, as, in (I Sam. 25:31) "As a stumbling block and a remorse."

have gathered blackness Heb. פָּארוּר, blackness like a pot.

Verse 12

Where is the lions' den? —This is a lamentation over Nineveh, which was the dwellings of kings, hard and strong as lions.
where the grown lion and the old lion went —The place where the kings would go and leave their children there, like a lion that dwelt securely.

Verse 13

The grown lion tore enough for his whelps —As Jonathan renders it: The kings would bring much plunder, until there was enough for the members of their households.
and strangled —beasts, for the necessity of his lionesses; i.e., he would increase his treasures for his children (sic). for his lionesses —for his wives.
and he filled his caves with prey —And they filled their treasuries with plunder.

Verse 14

her chariots —The multiplicity of the chariots therein; caraijedic in O.F. -army of chariots. The additional "hey" converts the language to mean many chariots. Simliarly, there is (Ezek 24:6) "The pot in which there is filth (חֶלְאָתָהּ)," much filth.
the voice of your ambassadors Heb. מַלְאָכֶיהָ. The voice of your ambassadors, as Rabshakeh and his colleagues, the ambassadors of Assyria, had already done, "And called in a loud voice in Judean" (Isa. 36:13).

Chapter 3

Verse 1

robbery Heb. פֶּרֶק, robbery, that one breaks it away from the hand of its owner.
the prey departs not —from its [i.e., the city's] midst, it will never depart.

Verse 2

The sound of the scourge —The sound of striking the horses was always heard therein.
and the sound of the noise —of the wheels of the chariots.
and galloping horses Heb. דֹּהֵר, skipping and jumping. And so it is in (Jud. 5:22) "By reason of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones."

Verse 3

and the blade of the sword Heb. וְלַהַב ; lame in French; for a knife and a sword are called לַהַב. [Some mss. have: The blade of every sword is called: לַהַב, as in (Jud. 3:22) "And the haft also went in after the blade (הַלַּהַב)."
and the burnished spear —A burnished spear, with the light glittering from it. Splendor in O.F, a shine.

yea, the heaps of corpses —They would make many corpses, and there was no count of the bodies of the dead cast therein, to the extent that the passersby would stumble on the bodies of the dead.

Verse 4

Because of the many harlotries of the harlot —Because of the extensive flattery of the city, for they knew how to seduce the kings of the earth to join them, and they would eventually subordinate [these kings] to them.

Verse 5

your skirts Heb. שׁוּלַיִךְ. They are the hems of a woman's garments.
your nakedness Heb. מַעֲרֵךְ, your exposure, as in (Micah 1:11) "With your private parts exposed (עֶרְיָה)."

Verse 6

detestable things —Filthy garments, which make you detestable. Scripture speaks according to the topic, for he [Nahum] compared her [Nineveh] to a harlot.
like dung Heb. כְּרֹאִי. Like dung, an expression like (Lev. 1:16) "And he shall remove its crop (מֶרְאָתוֹ) with its intestines."

Verse 7

shall wander away from you —Shall distance himself from you.

Verse 8

Are you better than No-amon —Why should you rely on your wealth and your might? Are you greater than No-amon? That is, Alexandria of Egypt. Amon is an expression of a pedagogue. [Are you greater] than the great No, which trained the kings of Egypt, for they would anoint the kings there?
whose wall was the sea to whom the sea was their rampart and their wall. [This mode of construction is known in Aramaic as] שורה ובר שורה, a wall and the son of a wall [referring to a large wall on the outside, opposite an inside of which is built a small wall].

Verse 9

Cush was [its] strength —The Cushites were its strength.
Put and the Lubim —The Putim and the Lubim, who were your helpers, were also in her [Assyria's] army.

Verse 10

She, too, went into exile —She, too, went into exile. Nevertheless, their greatness did not stand up before Nebuchadnezzar.
were bound Heb. רֻתְּקוּ, were fettered; an expression similar to (Isa. 40:19) "And chains (וּרְתֻקוֹת) of silver" and (Ezek. 7:23) "Make the chain (הָרָתוֹק)," meaning a chain.
in chains Heb. בַּזִּקִּים, chains.

Verse 11

You, too —(Even) according to your greatness, [you] shall become drunk like her with the cup of weakness (Cf. Isa. 51:17), and you shall disappear.

Verse 12

All your fortresses —It shall be easy to conquer all your fortified cities and to ravage all that is in their midst, like the fig trees when they are with their first ripe fruits; when the tree is shaken, the first ripe fruits fall into the mouth of the eaters.
fig trees Heb. תְּאֵנִים, fig trees.
they be shaken —which, if they be shaken hard by a man.

Verse 13

Verse 14

Draw siege water for yourself —When a city is about to be besieged, the people of the city gather much water into its midst in barrels, [so that they will have water] to drink during the days of the siege, when there are no cisterns within it [the city].
come into the clay and tread —it, to make bricks therefrom, in order to strengthen the cracks in the wall.
grasp the brickmold —Hold the brickmold, which is made for a mold of the bricks in your hand, to make bricks in it.

Verse 15

You shall be swept away Heb. תִּתְכַּבֵּד, with a broom of destruction.
like the nibbling locust —which finishes and destroys completely all the vegetation of the field. Some interpret: -Heb. תִּתְכַּבֵּד כַּיֶּלֶק. You shall be covered heavily with troops like the nibbling locust, wherein תִּתְכַּבֵּד is an expression of a heavy people (עַם כָּבֵד).

Verse 16

the nibbling locust spreads out and flies away —They will swiftly go out for commerce like the locust that spreads out [its wings] and flies.

Verse 17

Your princes Heb. מִנְזָרֶיךָ, your princes. The "mem" is a radical and a root of the word, like the "mem" of מִשְׁמַרְתְּךָ, your watch (Num. 18:3); of מִשְׁמַעְתְּךָ, your service (I Sam. 22:14); and of מִנְעָלֶךָ, your lock (Deut. 33:25). But sometimes the "mem" is defective; e.g., נְזִיר אֶחָיו, the prince of his brothers (Gen. 49:26); and, similarly, לְנָזְרִים, princes (Amos 2:11).
and your marshal Heb. וְטַפְסְרֶיךָ. Your appointees.
like armies of locust Heb. כְּגוֹב גּוֹבָי, like armies of locusts. גּוֹבָי is comme langouste in French, like locusts.
which alight on the walls on a cold day —So is the habit of the numerous locust, the fly, the finishing locust, and the nibbling locust; during the cold times they adhere to the walls, and when warmth comes they fly away from there and go away. So will all your people be exiled.
and it flies away Heb. וְנוֹדַד, and it moves.
and its place is not known where they are —Where they are and where they went.

Verse 18

Your leaders slumber Heb. נָמוּ, an expression of slumber
are at rest —They cannot stand up.

are scattered Heb. נָפְשׁוּ, like נָפְצוּ, as all letters emanating from one source are interchangeable. “Zayin,” “shin,” “sammech,” and “tzaddi” all emanate from the tip of the tongue and the bottom of the teeth.

Verse 19

No one is pained over your destruction —No one is troubled over your destruction, for everyone rejoices. כֵּהָה is an expression of a darkened thing.
clap hands —to rejoice.